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THE NOVA EBORAC COPPERS

by

Gary A. Trudgen

During the state coinage era, New York State did not authorize its own coinage. Nevertheless, several types of coins were struck bearing legends and devices related to the state (1). Of these issues, the NOVA EBORAC coppers are the most common.

There are four die varieties within the NOVA EBORAC series, struck from seven separate dies. The obverse of each variety features an anonymous mailed bust facing right. The back of the effigy's head is domed and the hair runs in fine parallel strands from a point at the back of the head (2). The eyes are almond shaped and the nose is prominent. The obverse legend is "Nova Eborac", which is Latin for "New York." The reverse of each variety depicts a seated female figure, much like that found on the reverse of British halfpence. The figure is seated on a globe with a shield at her side. In one hand she holds an olive branch, and in the other hand she grasps a staff topped with a liberty cap. Depicted within the shield is a sun rising over a mountain range with a body of water in the foreground. This scene is taken from the shield contained in the Arms of New York State. The reverse legend is "Virt. Et Lib.", which is abbreviated Latin for "Strength and Freedom." Below a single baseline is the date 1787.

The NOVA EBORAC coppers were originally thought to have been struck in England; however, punch linkage studies clearly show them to be of American origin. They are punch linked to the EXCELSIOR coppers, the gold Brasher Doubloon, the Group 2 Atlee halfpence and the "running fox" New Jersey coppers (3). It is believed that these issues were struck by John Bailey and Ephraim Brasher at an unauthorized mint in or near New York City. The extent of their copartnership and details of their operation are uncertain. The approximate start and end dates of their coinage operation, however, are known from two extant records. On February 12, 1787 the New York State Assembly read several petitions from Bailey and Brasher requesting the authority to coin copper (4). Thus, it is likely that they began operations shortly before this time. On August 1, 1789, during the height of the copper crisis, Bailey testified before a New York City official that he had not struck New Jersey coppers since April 15, 1788 (5). It is thought that the New Jersey coppers were the last issue from their mint (6). Therefore, the end date of their coinage operation was April 15, 1788. John Bailey is generally credited with engraving the coinage dies for their operation, with the possible exception of the doubloon dies. Thus, it is concluded that the NOVA EBORAC coppers were struck in New York City during the year 1787 from dies engraved by John Bailey.

Bailey was principally a cutler and brass founder. After learning the cutlers trade in Sheffield, England, he emigrated to America in 1755. He settled in New York City and operated a cutlery business in partnership with James Youle. During the American Revolution, when it became apparent that the British army intended to occupy New York City, John Bailey evacuated his family to patriot held territory north of the city. While at Fishkill, New York he fabricated George Washington's service sword (the sword Washington wore into battle.) This sword is now a treasured artifact, residing in the collections of the Smithsonian Institute. After the war, Bailey returned to New York City. He established himself in Little Dock Street where initially he continued the cutlery trade, but later he entered into the brass foundry business. After the turn of the century, he moved to Maiden Lane and became a merchant in partnership with his son James S. Bailey. John Bailey died on January 22, 1815 and was interred in New York City at St. Paul's cemetery.

As previously mentioned, there are four NOVA EBORAC die varieties. In 1875, Sylvester Crosby assigned alphanumeric labels to each variety (7). He simply designated each obverse die with a sequential number, starting with the numeral one. Similarly, he assigned alphabetic letters for each reverse die. Crosby 1-A is known as the "figure right" variety and refers to the direction the reverse seated figure faces when viewed in the upright position. Crosby 1-B is called the "figure left" variety because the reverse seated figure faces left. Crosby 2-C is termed the "large head" variety because of the size of the obverse central device. Finally, Crosby 3-D is known as the "small head" variety, again referring to the size of the central device of the obverse die. An examination of the variety labels reveals that three obverse and four reverse dies were used to strike the series.

Crosby's die labeling scheme was arbitrary and not meant to indicate an emission sequence. An examination, however, of each variety does reveal the likely emission sequence, and it is the exact opposite of Crosby's assigned label sequence. That is — variety 3-D was struck first and then followed in order by 2-C, 1-B, and 1-A.



Figure 1
NOVA EBORAC "Small Head"
Enlarged 2X
Photo: Eric P. Newman

There has been some speculation that variety 3-D, or the "small head" NOVA EBORAC, is a contemporary counterfeit; however, a careful comparison of the letters used in the "small head" legends shows that they are the same as found on the other NOVA EBORAC varieties (8). Some of the key letter punch diagnostics are as follows. A lopsided vertical serif on the middle stroke of the letter "E". An especially wide letter "N". The letter "V" has a rounded bottom, where the rounding is more pronounced on the left side. Also, the date and denticle punches that were used to engrave the "small head" dies are the same punches that were used to engrave the dies of the other NOVA EBORAC varieties. Therefore, this study concludes that the "small head" is not a contemporary counterfeit and that its dies were also engraved by John Bailey (9).

The "small head" variety was the first to be struck within the series [Figure 1]. It exhibits several artistic style similarities with the two 1787 Muttonhead Connecticut coppers (10). I believe the Muttonhead dies were the first dies engraved by John Bailey and that the "small head" NOVA EBORAC dies were his next effort (11). Some of the style similarities are: the mail or armor design

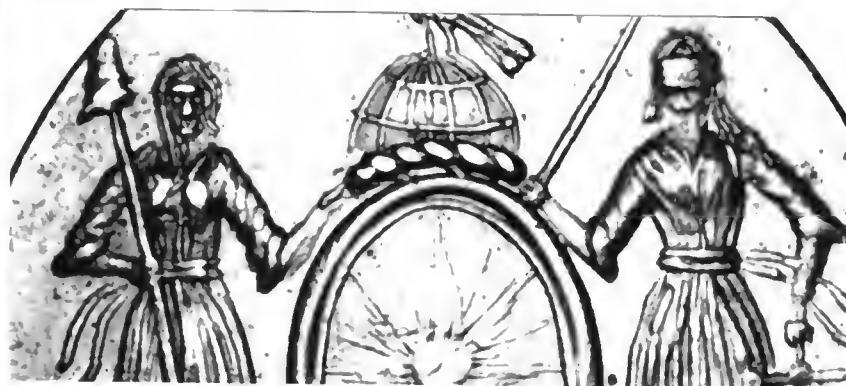


Figure 2
N.Y. EXCELSIOR Sleeve & Elbow Cuff Detail
 Enlarged 10X
 Photo: Bowers & Ruddy, ex-Kensington: 232

of the obverse central device; the decorative border of the shield on the reverse; the reverse seated figure's head and treatment of her hair; and the brimmed liberty cap atop the staff. Another artistic style characteristic which identifies John Bailey is his method of engraving the human elbow. On first look, his engraved elbows appear elongated with an unnatural appearance as though something is hung or wrapped around them. Further consideration suggests that Bailey was depicting a large cuff on a mid-length sleeve [Figure 2] although some of his dies show little evidence of the sleeve. This engraving style is found on all varieties of the Muttonhead, NOVA EBORAC, and EXCELSIOR coppers (12).



Figure 3
CONNECTICUT "Muttonhead", Miller 1-C of 1787
 Enlarged 2X
 Photo: Bowers & Ruddy, ex-Kensington: 233

Another item which ties the "small head" NOVA EBORAC to the Muttonhead Connecticut coppers is the method in which their dies failed [Figure 3]. The obverse dies, of the subject coppers, were not sufficiently hardened, and they collapsed in the center causing a bulge on the coin around the head of the mailed bust. Since these dies experienced the same failure mode, this provides further evidence that the dies were manufactured within the same time frame and by the same coinage operation.

The obverse legend of the "small head" NOVA EBORAC is punctuated by a six-pointed star, while the reverse legend contains periods and quatrefoils. The six-pointed star punch appears to be the same punch that was later used to engrave the dies for the EXCELSIOR coppers and obverses 74 and 76 of the "running fox" New Jersey coppers. The quatrefoil appears not to have been punched into the die, but rather made-up or engraved via a small round graver.

The "small head" NOVA EBORAC is the rarest variety of the series. A summary of pertinent data on this variety follows (13):

Extant Number Estimate:	10-12 specimens
Recorded Condition Census:	30-20-20-18-12-8
Planchet Diameter:	25-27 mm
Mean Planchet Weight:	132 grains
Standard Deviation (Weight):	8 grains
Recorded MIN/MAX Weights:	120/142 grains

The next NOVA EBORAC variety to be struck was the "large head" [Figure 4]. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that the "large head" has several very similar style characteristics with the "small head" variety. Also, it experienced the same die failure mechanism as the "small head" NOVA EBORAC and the Muttonhead dies. The obverse die failed very early in its use, and almost all specimens of this variety exhibit a bulge in the field around the effigy's head (14). As a result of this die failure there is a loss of detail on the coin, mainly along the right side of the legend.



Figure 4
NOVA EBORAC "Large Head"
Enlarged 2X
Photo: Bowers & Ruddy, ex-Garrett:595

A new ornamentation punch was employed in the manufacture of the "large head" dies. It is the somewhat asymmetrical quatrefoil that punctuates the obverse and reverse legends. This same quatrefoil punch was also used later in the fabrication of the dies for the remaining two NOVA EBORAC varieties, the Brasher Doubloon, and the "running fox" New Jersey coppers. Periods were also used within the reverse legend of the "large head" variety.

The "large head" NOVA EBORAC is the second rarest variety of the series. A summary of pertinent data on this variety follows:

Extant Number Estimate:	25-30 specimens
Recorded Condition Census:	60-58-50-40-30-20
Planchet Diameter:	29 mm
Mean Planchet Weight:	136 grains
Standard Deviation (Weight):	14 grains
Recorded MIN/MAX Weights:	119/157 grains



Figure 5
NOVA EBORAC Figure Left - Partial Date (above),
 Photo: Bowers & Ruddy, ex-Garrett:596
 and
Figure Left - Full Date (right),
 Photo: The Author
 Enlarged 2X

The "figure left" variety was minted next [Figure 5]. The dies for this variety held up much better than the dies for the previous two varieties. The die hardening problems were being corrected.

As a result, this variety was struck in much larger quantities; however, there was still a die deterioration problem. This time it was the reverse die. The die was prepared in such a way that even initially the periphery of the upper left quadrant was weakly struck. This affected "RT.ET" of the legend and the seated figure's head. As the dies were used, this area became weaker. Also, early die state coins were struck with full complete dates. But, again as the dies were used, the date area deteriorated until late die state coins show very little of the date. Full complete date specimens are much rarer than coins with partial dates.



Figure 6
NOVA EBORAC Figure Right - Late Die State (above),
Photo: The Author
and

Figure Right - Middle Die State (right),
Photo: The Author
Enlarged 2X

The "figure left" NOVA EBORAC is the most common variety of the series. A summary of pertinent data on this variety follows:

Extant Number Estimate:

FULL COMPLETE DATE: 30-40 specimens
PARTIAL DATE: 170-210 specimens

Recorded Condition Census: 58-55-55-50-50-50
Planchet Diameter: 27 mm
Mean Planchet Weight: 131 grains
Standard Deviation (Weight): 12 grains
Recorded MIN/MAX 'Weights: 88/150 grains

IMPORTANT: Do not mistake a weak, but readable, date as a full complete date specimen!

The remaining "figure right" variety was, of course, minted last [Figure 6]. This variety shares the same obverse die with the "figure left" variety. An examination of the condition of the obverse die for each of the subject varieties indicates the sequence of emission. When combined to strike the "figure right" variety, the obverse die exhibits a break along the outer edge of the quatrefoil that follows "EBORAC" of the legend. This die break is not found when the obverse die was employed to strike the "figure left" variety.

Again, the reverse die deteriorated quickly when it was pressed into service. The reverse is found in three distinct die states. An early die state strike shows the die as made [Figure 7]. However, the die quickly began to fail in the lower right quadrant. The middle die state shows the progression of this failure. It started as a hairline crack extending downward and inward from the rim opposite the "B" of the legend, then it passed through the quatrefoil and terminated at the seated figure's right foot. As striking progressed the crack widened towards the rim until complete failure occurred resulting in a large triangular cud. This large triangular cud represents the late die state. The middle and late die states result in loss of definition of the letter "B", the quatrefoil, the seated figure's left leg and right foot, and the date area.

Of the four NOVA EBORAC varieties, this is the only one with the reverse seated figure facing right. The reverse seated figure faces left on the other three varieties. Also, the mean planchet weight of the "figure right" variety is significantly lower than the other three varieties. This is also an indication that it was the last variety struck. Planchet weights during the state coinage era tended to decrease with time, which contributed to the copper crisis in 1789.

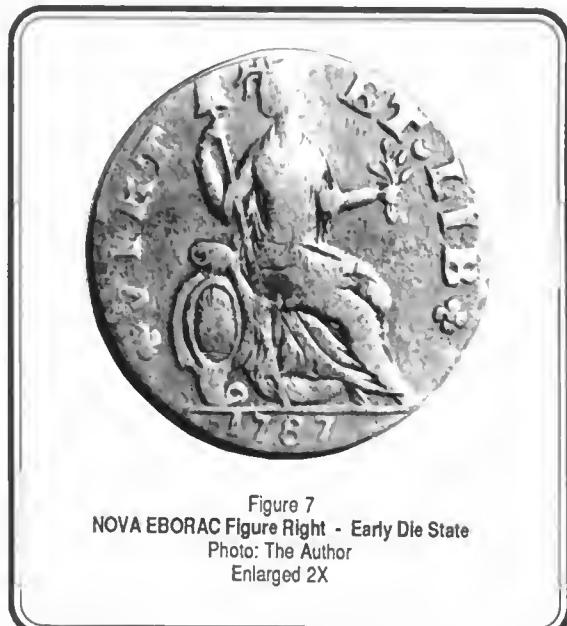


Figure 7
NOVA EBORAC Figure Right - Early Die State
Photo: The Author
Enlarged 2X

The "figure right" NOVA EBORAC is found in slightly smaller quantities than the "figure left" variety. A summary of pertinent data on the "figure right" variety follows:

Extant Number Estimate:

EARLY DIE STATE:	15-20 specimens
MIDDLE DIE STATE:	40-50 specimens
LATE DIE STATE:	90-120 specimens

Recorded Condition Census:	60-45-45-40-40-40
Planchet Diameter:	27 mm
Mean Planchet Weight:	106 grains
Standard Deviation (Weight):	7 grains
Recorded MIN/MAX Weight:	90/119 grains

IMPORTANT: Do not mistake an "Early" middle die state, which exhibits only a hairline crack, as an early die state specimen!

In general, the central devices were sunk too deeply into the NOVA EBORAC dies. Therefore, specimens are often found with softly struck centers. John Bailey had previously encountered the same problem with the Connecticut Muttonhead dies, when he cut the obverse device too deeply into the die. Also, off-center strikes are common within the NOVA EBORAC series. The "small head" variety is usually struck with the obverse off-center towards 6 o'clock and the reverse off-center to the left. The "large head" and "figure right" varieties are often found struck with the obverse off-center to the right. The "figure left" variety is commonly found with the reverse off-center to the 12 o'clock position. Thus, well centered specimens with all of the legends and date on the planchet are difficult to locate. An additional observation is that there exist well worn survivors of each NOVA EBORAC variety which leads to the conclusion that the NOVA EBORAC issue was readily accepted into circulation by the populace.

As initially stated, the NOVA EBORAC coppers were an unauthorized coinage. So, why were they struck? In all likelihood the first two varieties, the "small head" and "large head", were struck near the time Bailey and Brasher petitioned the New York State Assembly for a coinage grant. Examples of the "large head" variety may have been presented to the legislature to illustrate their coinage capability and their proposed devices and legends for a New York coinage (15). This conclusion is reached because the "large head" was apparently struck in small quantities, but nevertheless a large percentage of high grade specimens exist today. The high grade specimens may have been given to individuals in the legislature who saved them as souvenirs. The "small head" variety, which is found in lower grades, was probably a trial striking done before the petitions were filed. However, because the "small head" obverse die quickly failed, new dies ("large head") were prepared for the petitions with the hope of obtaining properly struck coins, but unfortunately the same die failure occurred. In spite of this problem specimens were still presented to the legislature. The latter issues, consisting of the "figure left" and "figure right" varieties, were undoubtedly struck shortly after it became apparent that a coinage grant would not be issued. The New York State legislature passed a bill on April 20, 1787 which regulated the value of the copper coin then in circulation (16). This bill ended any hope of obtaining a legitimate coinage franchise within the state. Thus, the last two NOVA EBORAC varieties were struck strictly for profit and were probably accepted into circulation at the rate of 14 per shilling (17). This was the going rate for coppers until the April 20th coinage act took effect on August 1, 1787 at which time the rate was lowered by 30 percent to 20 coppers per shilling.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to thank Mike Ringo for reviewing this article and verifying the punch linkage and style similarity claims.

NOTES

- (1). There are six copper coin types and one gold coin type. The copper coins are: Non Vi Virtute Vici, Excelsior, George Clinton, Indian and New York Arms, Indian and Eagle on Globe, and Nova Eborac. The gold coin is the famous Brasher Doubloon.
- (2). Walter Breen speculates that this style was copied from one of the 1785 Connecticut copper dies engraved by Abel Buell, namely obverse 6.4.
- (3). The "running fox" refers to an apparent mint mark contained in the reverse legend. However, there is disagreement concerning the identity of the animal. Walter Breen claims that the animal is really a "running horse."
- (4). The wording within the Assembly Journal for 1787 is such that it is unclear whether Bailey and Brasher filed separate petitions or petitioned together. This question cannot be easily clarified because the petitions were destroyed in the 1911 New York State Library fire; however, the punch linkage connections of their various coinage issues and the fact that the petitions were filed and read on the same days strongly argues that the petitions were filed in concert.
- (5). Beginning in 1787 the public gradually lost confidence in the miscellaneous copper coin then in circulation. With time the volume of copper coin in circulation was increased by domestic and foreign sources. Many of these coppers were unauthorized and underweight. Public distrust grew until it reached crisis dimensions in mid-1789. At this time most copper coin suffered a drastic loss in value and ceased to circulate.
- (6). The New Jersey coppers struck by John Bailey are dated 1788. All of their other issues are dated 1787.
- (7). Crosby, Sylvester. "The Early Coins of America," 1875.
- (8). The letter punch comparisons were done with 2X photo enlargements of high grade specimens.
- (9). Walter Breen professes two opinions concerning the "small head" NOVA EBORAC that this writer respectfully disagrees with. (See Walter Breen's "Complete Encyclopedia of U. S. and Colonial Coins," p.94). First, Walter believes that the "small head" is of an entirely different style than the other NOVA EBORAC varieties. Second, he believes that the "small head" was struck at Matthias Ogden's Elizabethtown, New Jersey mint. Walter has found that some of the "small head" letter punches were used to prepare the dies for the "plaited mane" New Jersey copper varieties: Maris 34-J, 34-V, 35-J, 35-W, 70-x, 71-y, 72-z, and 73-aa. (This punch linking claim has not been verified by the author). It is believed that these New Jersey copper varieties were struck in 1789 at the Elizabethtown mint. Thus, his reason for attributing the "small head" variety to this mint. However, since the "small head" dies were prepared with the same letter, date, and denticle punches as the other NOVA EBORAC varieties, it is more likely that the Elizabethtown mint obtained the subject punches after the "small head" had already been struck by Bailey and Brasher.

(10). Miller 1.2-C and 1.2-mm.

(11). Trudgen, Gary A. "The Mysterious Muttonhead," Bower's & Merena *Rare Coin Review* No. 63, Winter 1986/87.

(12). The author wishes to thank the editor, J. C. Spilman, for his observation that John Bailey's unusual human elbows are really large sleeve cuffs placed at the elbow. There are a few non-Bailey state coppers that also show a cuff at the elbow; however, the cuff in these instances is less prominent. For example, the Miller 1-A 1786 Connecticut copper, and some of the 1788 Vermont varieties show a cuff at the elbow. The remaining state coppers that have a seated goddess as the reverse central device show the sleeve cuff shoved further up on the arm, near the staff.

(13). A word about the data summaries. The extant number estimates are just that. The estimates are based upon several years of compiled data on the series. For most part, the condition census information was gleaned from auction sales that occurred over this past decade. The planchet diameter information was taken from Walter Breen's "Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins." The planchet weight data was complied from auction sales and personal measurement. The number of specimens used to obtain the published weight figures are as follows:

SMALL HEAD:	6
LARGE HEAD:	10
FIGURE LEFT:	37
FIGURE RIGHT:	28

If the planchet weights follow a normal distribution, the theoretical absolute maximum and minimum planchet weights can be calculated. The maximum planchet weight is equal to the mean planchet weight + 3 standard deviations. Likewise, the minimum planchet weight is equal to the mean planchet weight - 3 standard deviations. For example, the theoretical absolute maximum and minimum planchet weights for the "small head" variety are:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{MAXIMUM PLANCHET WEIGHT} &= 132 + (3 \times 8) = 156 \text{ grains} \\ \text{MINIMUM PLANCHET WEIGHT} &= 132 - (3 \times 8) = 108 \text{ grains}\end{aligned}$$

(14). At least one specimen is known that was struck before the obverse die failed. This specimen was sold in New Netherland's 51st Sale in June of 1958.

(15). The Excelsior coppers, which are also attributed to Bailey and Brasher's mint, were also apparently patterns for a New York State coinage. Walter Breen speculates that the Nova Eborac coppers were Bailey's proposal for a state coinage, while the Excelsior coppers were Brasher's proposal or vice versa.

(16). The title of the coinage bill was "An act to regulate the circulation of Copper Coin in this State."

(17). William Bentley, a minister in Salem Massachusetts, recorded in his diary for September 2 through October 27, 1787 a description of a Nova Eborac copper in his possession. Since the "figure left" and "figure right" varieties are by far the most common of the series, it is likely that Bentley probably observed one of these two varieties. Thus this contemporary eyewitness account confirms the time frame assigned for the manufacture of the Nova Eborac coppers.

APPENDIX A

CONDITION DISTRIBUTION

In order for a collector to purchase wisely, he needs accurate rarity and condition (grade) information on each variety within the series he is collecting. Rarity, or the number of extant specimens for the NOVA EBORAC series, is estimated within the main body of the text. Also, a condition census of the top six coins of each variety is given. These rarity and condition census estimates were extracted from a data base maintained by the author. Additional information concerning condition, which may be useful to the collector, can also be gleaned from this data base.

Specimen condition is spread over a range of basal to uncirculated. This same condition range is also represented by a numeric grade range of 1 to 60. (The mint state grade range, from 61 to 70, is not included because it is meaningless for this series.) All extant specimens fall within this one large range. If this large range is separated into several discrete grade ranges, then the distribution of the condition of the entire population of a particular variety is displayed. In other words, this information shows the percentage of specimens from the total extant population that fall into each grade range. The discrete grade ranges chosen for this study are as follows:

1 - 4	(Basal to Good)
5 - 12	(Good+ to Fine)
13 - 20	(Fine+ to Very Fine)
21 - 40	((Very Fine+ to Extremely Fine)
41 - 60	(Extremely Fine+ to UNCirculated)

The number of specimens of each variety contained in the data base represent a large percentage of the estimated extant population. Therefore, the following condition distribution graphs should be representative of the entire extant population. Since assignment of specimen condition or grading is subjective, these graphs are only a guide and should not be considered as absolute. Condition data was compiled from auction catalogs, fixed price lists, and the author's personal inspection of specimens. Also, condition distribution of the less rare varieties, figures left and right, is probably skewed towards the higher grades. This is because lower grade specimens are often not included in auction sales.

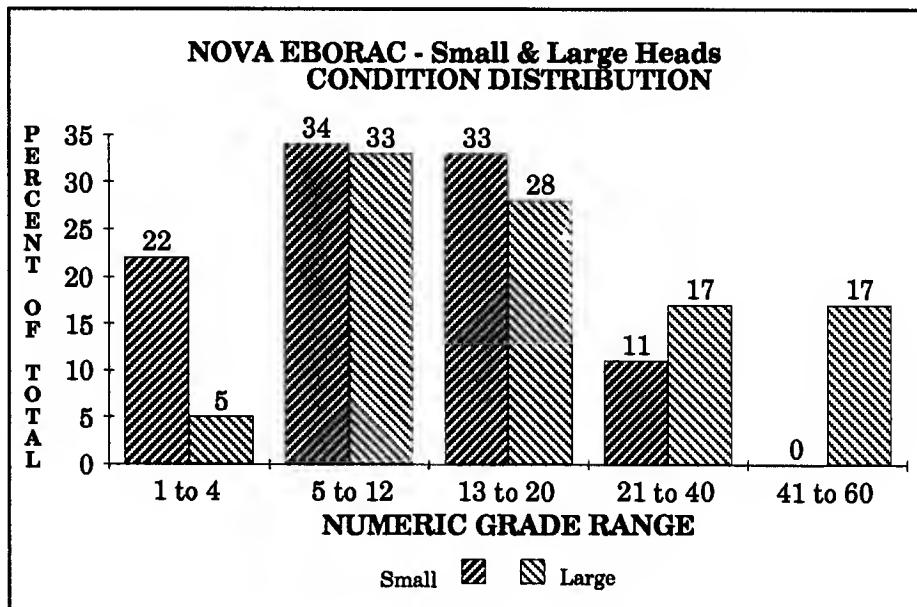
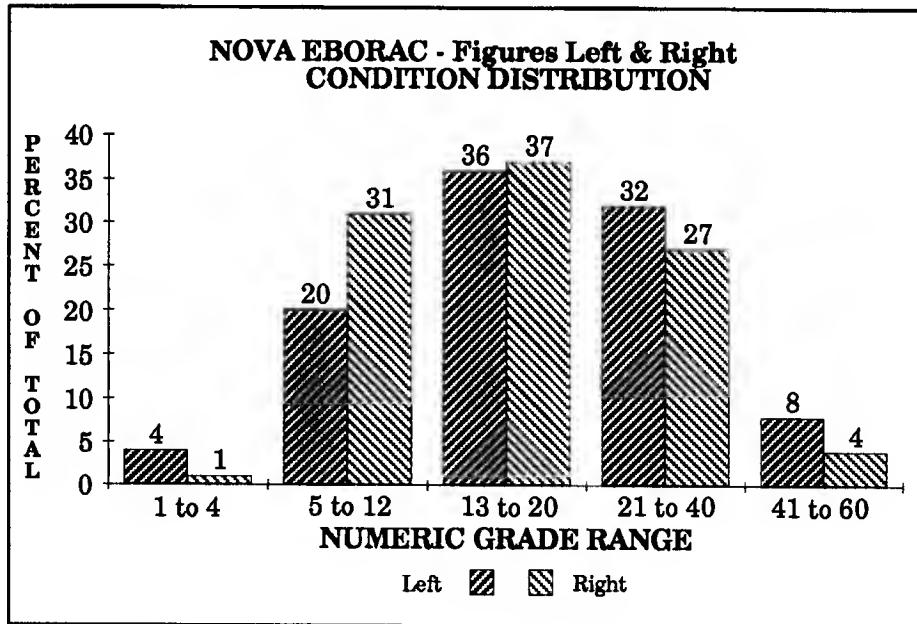
Condition distribution of the series is displayed via two bar graphs. First, a graph for the two rare varieties, the small and large heads. Second, a graph for the two more common varieties, figures left and right.

Inspection of the first graph immediately shows that none of the known "small head" variety specimens fall within the EF+ to UNC condition grade, and that the majority of the "small head" specimens are found in the lower grade ranges from B to VF. The condition distribution of the "large head" variety is skewed towards the higher grade ranges. The majority of the "large head" specimens fall within the G+ to VF condition range, but a significant percentage of these specimens also fall in the VF+ to UNC condition range.

Inspection of the second bar graph shows similar distributions for both the "figure left" and "figure right" varieties. The distributions are somewhat gaussian in shape, peaking in the F+ to VF condition range. The majority of the specimens of both varieties fall in the G+ to EF condition range.

The number of specimens comprising this study is as follows:

Small Head (Crosby 3-D):	9	Large Head (Crosby 2-C):	18
Figure Left (Crosby 1-B):	119	Figure Right (Crosby 1-A):	83

CHART 1**CHART 2**

Rarity Ratings of Massachusetts Copper Coins

by
Mike Packard

The table on the following page gives my estimate, as of August 1991, of the rarity ratings of Massachusetts copper coins. The rarity numbers refer to the Sheldon rarity scale:

R-8	1 to 3 specimens known
R-7	4 to 12 known
R-6	13 to 30 known
R-5	31 to 75 known
R-4	76 to 200 known
R-3	201 to -?- known

Sheldon did not have a numerical value for the upper bound on the number of specimens in the R-3 category, nor did he have numerical values for his R-2 and R-1 categories. R-3 was described as "Scarce" and I believe that no variety of Massachusetts copper is more common than "Scarce" on his scale.

The starting point for my rarities were the rarity estimates of Robert Vlack (from his 1978 Massachusetts plates, converted to the Sheldon scale), and of Richard August. The refinements are based on auction appearances of Massachusetts coppers and the results of my own Massachusetts copper survey. Not all collectors and owners of Massachusetts copper coins have responded to my survey, so my rarities are not based on an exact population census.

The higher rarity varieties (R-6, R-7, and R-8) are based on the actual number of specimens reported to me. The lower rarity varieties are based on my surveys, the Vlack and August rarity estimates, and "gut" feeling. As more collections and specimens are reported to me, the rarity of some varieties, especially the high rarity varieties, will fall.

If you have not sent me a listing of your Massachusetts copper holdings, please consider doing so. All information on individual collections will be held in strict confidence. I only have information on the public collections of the ANS and the Smithsonian. If you are aware of holdings by other museums or organizations, please let me know. My address is: 4905 Village Drive; Fairfax, VA 22030

On the rarity ratings table I have separated out the four contemporary counterfeits with Ryder numbers. I have included the transposed arrows variety with the mint issued varieties even though it may not be an official mint product, because the obverse is certainly "original". The letter punches on the reverse die of the transposed arrows variety do not match those used on the dies of other varieties issued by the official mint..

It is fairly easy to construct a high grade date and denomination type set of Massachusetts copper coins, but is very difficult to put together a complete variety set of 45 coins and impossible to find all 45 coins in Extremely Fine grade or better. Varieties available in Mint State include:

1787 half cent -- 4-B, 4-C, and 5-A;	1787 cent -- 2b-A and 3-G; and,
1788 half cent -- 1-B;	1788 cent -- 1-D and 10-L.

Many other varieties are available in Extremely Fine or About Uncirculated grades. Varieties which are difficult to locate in grades above Very Good include:

1787 half cent -- 4-D;	1787 cent -- 2b-G, 4-J, and 8-G; and,
1788 cent -- 9-M, 12-H, 12-K, 12-O, 13-I, 16-M, and 17-I.	

For five of these varieties, specimens grading above Very Fine are unknown.

1991
Rarity Ratings
for
Massachusetts Copper Coins

1787**1788****HALF CENTS**

Variety	Rarity	Comments
1-D	4+	
2-A	5	
3-A	5+	
4-B	6-	
4-C	3-	
4-D	8	3 known
5-A	3+	
6-A	6	
6-D	6-	

HALF CENTS

Variety	Rarity	Comments
1-A	5	
1-B	3-	

CENTS

Variety	Rarity	Comments	Variety	Rarity	Comments
2b-A	3-	Horned eagle	8-C	3+	
2b-C	5		9-M	6	
2b-E	5		10-L	3	
2a-F	6+	Transposed arrows	11-C	5	
2b-G	7+	4 known	11-E	4	
3-G	3		11-F	5	
4-C	5		12-H	7+	5 known
4-D	4		12-I	4	
4-J	7+	4 known	12-K	6	
6-G	4		12-M	3+	
8-G	7	9 known	12-O	7+	4 known
			13-I	7+	4 known
			13-N	4+	

COUNTERFEIT CENTS

1-B	7+	5 known
5-I	7+	5 known
7-H	7-	11 known

COUNTERFEIT CENTS

14-J	8	2 known
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Ryder and Crosby list a 1788 cent variety 5-H.

VLack lists a 1788 cent variety 11-G.

No specimens of either variety are currently known.

If located, these varieties will be added to the listing.

A Forgotten New Jersey Colonial Coinage Proposal

by

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(TN-138)

The Rahway, New Jersey, mint of Mould, Goadsby and Cox almost had a second competitor in 1787, it appears from some 200-year-old scratch notes apparently made casually by a colonial-era state legislator and miraculously preserved.¹

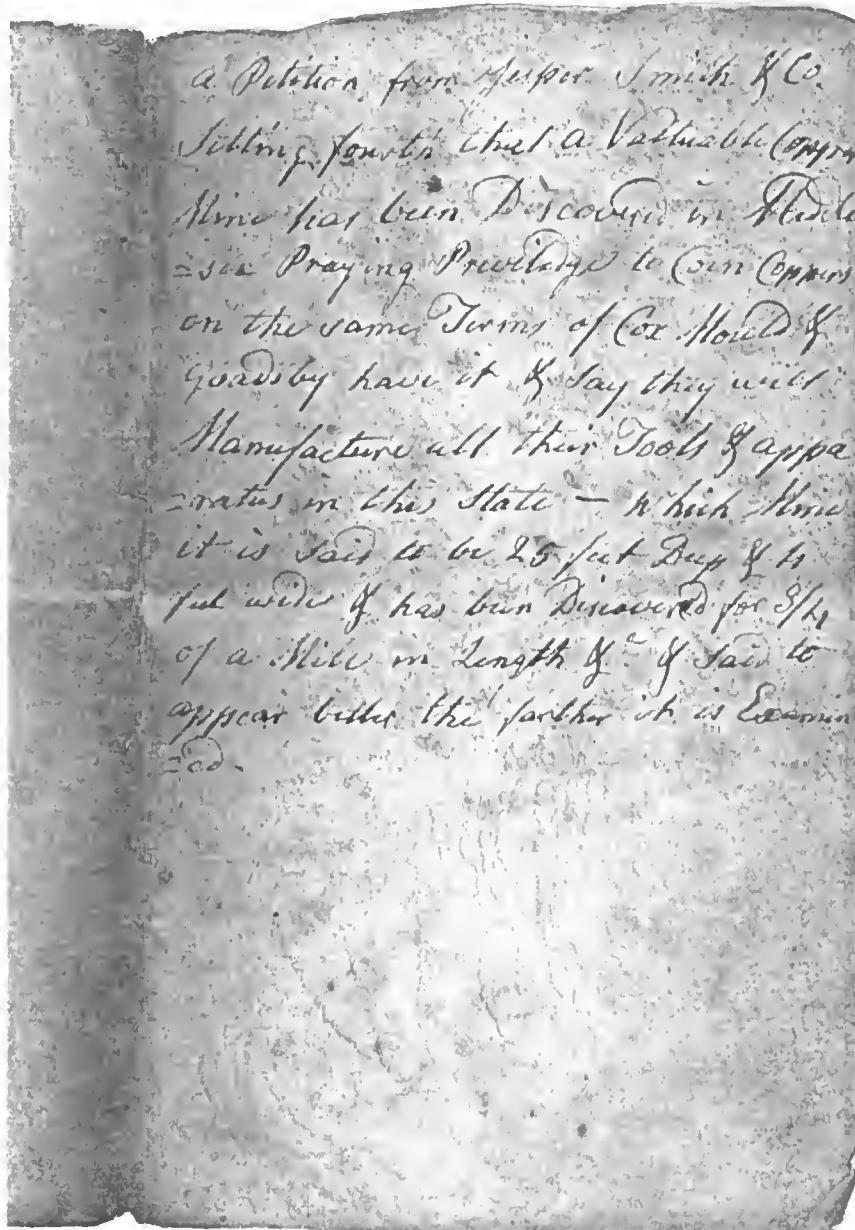
The notes, which appear to have been written by Burlington County Assembly delegate Joseph Biddle in late 1786 or early 1787, describe a petition then made to the legislature by a firm having interests in a newly discovered Middlesex County copper mine. The firm sought to obtain a copper coinage franchise on the same terms as the legislature had granted to Mould and his partners some six months earlier. The one-page portion of the notes pertaining to this petition, which is reproduced herein *in toto*, simply states:

A petition from Jasper Smith & Co.
Setting fourth that a Valuable Copper
Mine has been Discovered in Middle
sex Praying Priviledge to Coin Coppers
on the same Terms of Cox Mould &
Goadsby have it & Say they will
Manufacture all their Tools & appa
ratus in this State -- which Mine
it is said to be 25 feet Deep & 4
feet wide & has been Discovered for 3/4
of a Mile in Length &c. & said to
appear better the further it is Examin
ed.

The Jasper Smith & Co. petition was dismissed by the Assembly on May 17, 1787.² No record of the petition or its contents, except what is contained in the Biddle session notes, survives today. The Biddle notes belong to Wilhelmina Woodward of New Egypt, N.J., and were recently discovered along with various deeds, mortgages, wills, contracts, surveys, surveyors' field notes and similar old documents among her late husband's family papers.

¹ Thanks to Michael Hodder for examining the Biddle notes and making helpful suggestions which led to their identification and placement in their proper historical and numismatic context, and for critiquing the draft of this article. Errors are my responsibility.

² Votes and Proceedings of the Eleventh General Assembly of the State of New-Jersey. At a session begun at Trenton on the 24th Day of October, 1786, and continued by Adjournments. Being the Second Sitting. (Hereinafter "Proceedings"). Trenton, Isaac Collins, 1787. p. 7.



Full Size Reproduction
of
Page From Joseph Biddle Notebook
Pertaining to Jasper Smith & Co. Petition

The legislative franchise to Mould, Goadsby and Cox had been granted on June 1, 1786.³ Its terms required the partners to produce, under bond, within two years' time, 10,000 pounds worth of copper coins at 15 coppers to the shilling, or 3,000,000 coins and to pay to the State one-tenth of the coppers coined. The legislation had moved to a vote swiftly; on May 24, 1786, the committee appointed to confer with Mould and his partners had reported favorably on Mould's proposal.⁴ Two days later, the competing petition of William Leddel was received and read.⁵ Although Leddel offered to pay a larger commission than Mould -- one-ninth of the coppers coined -- he apparently lacked Mould's political clout in those days before public bidding laws, and Mould won out. Mould's bill was read a second time, debated, ordered to be engrossed, and passed by a roll call vote of 28 to 6; no further record of Leddel's petition appears.⁶

One can speculate that Jasper Smith's company (from Morris County, New Jersey) may have been aware of the developing difficulties among Mould, Goadsby and Cox that led to amendatory legislation enacted on November 22, 1786, permitting the latter two partners to strike two-thirds of the authorized coinage independently of Mould.⁷ Smith's firm may have concluded that the time was ripe for presenting another competing proposal to the legislature to win a colning contract for itself. It is at this point in time that the Biddle session notes begin.

The notes consist of 32 pages, 4x6-1/4" in size, folded and pinned together at the spine with a common house pin. Eighteen of the interior pages are blank. The first page of the notes contains reference to a bill "to raise a Revnue (sic) on Stages ferries & Taverns" and gives details of the fees proposed. The notes contain a tally of the favorable vote on this bill: "Shall It pass Y" (followed by a string of 25 ink dots) "N" (followed by only 11 dots). This is immediately followed by the comment: "To Meet at Burlington May 16th. Carried by a Grand Manuvre Huzza for our Side." These entries refer to legislative business that took place on November 24, 1786, and suggest that the writer of the notes may have been one of the three Burlington County assembly delegates.⁸ No further record of legislative proceedings

³ *Acts of the Tenth General Assembly of the State of New-Jersey*. At a session begun at Trenton on the 25th Day of October, 1785, and continuing by Adjournments. Being the Third Sitting. (Hereinafter "Acts"). Trenton, Isaac Collins, 1786. Chapter 154, at pp. 326-327. Reproduced in S. S. Crosby, *The Early Coins of America* (Boston, self-published, 1875), p. 278.

⁴ *Proceedings, Tenth General Assembly, Third Sitting*. Elizabethtown, Shepard Kollock, 1786. p. 12.

⁵ *Ibid.* , p.14. Cited in Crosby, p. 276. The Leddel petition is set forth in full in Crosby, p. 277.

⁶ *Ibid.* , pp. 14, 15, 26.

⁷ *Acts, Eleventh General Assembly, First Sitting*. Chapter 178 at pp.370-371.

⁸ *Proceedings, Eleventh General Assembly, First Sitting*, pp. 73-76. It is therein recorded that the upper chamber, the Legislative Council, had that day passed "An Act for raising a Revenue from certain Stages, Ferries and Taverns" and that the Assembly concurred; the text of the act appears in *Acts, Eleventh General Assembly, First Sitting*, Chapter 187, at pp. 377-382, the terms of which are outlined in the aforesaid notes. At the end of the day's business, which concluded the first sitting of the Eleventh General Assembly, the *Proceedings* record that "The House adjourned to meet at the City of Burlington, on Wednesday the sixteenth Day of May next." The New Jersey colonial legislature did not always meet in Trenton, the capital;

appears in the notes, but there is discussion pertaining to the settling of the account of one Coombs, "Late State Clothier," followed by the entry pertaining to the Jasper Smith petition. The balance of the notebook contains survey descriptions and one date, May 2, 1788, on the rear page (which has been turned upside down and used to make a fresh start).

The three Burlington County delegates to the eleventh General Assembly were David Ridgway, Uriah Woolman and Biddle.⁹ We can establish Biddle as the writer of the notes because Ms. Woodward's papers contain a similar 12-page set of session/survey notes plus a survey map, all appearing to be in the same hand. The map contains descriptions of some of the same lands as are described in the survey notes, and the map is signed on the reverse: "Joseph Biddle's Map 1431" 2" 00 & Allowance for roads" -- apparently a map showing Biddle's division and disposition of his 1,431 acre Springfield Township tract. Biddle's original will made April 7, 1791 and proved February 14, 1792, after his death, is on file in the New Jersey Archives¹⁰ and appears to be in the same hand as the aforesaid map and two sets of session notes.

In addition to providing the sole extant information on the contents of the Jasper Smith petition, Biddle's notes contain the only surviving contemporaneous reference to the Mould, Goadsby and Cox franchise outside of official court or legislative documents. No other unofficial mention of the New Jersey coining operation is known to Michael Hodder, who is doing extensive research on this operation, or to me.

The major copper deposits of New Jersey are located in Middlesex County, centered along the trap rocks of the First Mountain. There are many old mines near New Brunswick, Somerville, Griggstown, and other places, some of which are known to have been worked in colonial times. None was as successful as the Belleville or Schuyler mine, but at least one, at Griggstown, imported 160 Welsh miners before 1776 to work the site. The location of Jasper Smith's mine cannot be determined from the Biddle notes, but the description of its vein ("... 25 feet Deep & 4 feet wide ... (running) 3/4 of a Mile") sounds like an exaggeration, given the known sizes of contemporary mines.¹¹

Jasper Smith was an early colonial judge of Hunterdon County, serving in 1754 and later years. He graduated from Princeton College (now University) in 1758 and took an active part in the Revolution, serving on the Amwell Township Committee of Safety. In 1807, the date of the earliest preserved record of the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville, Mercer County, Smith's name appears as one of the governing elders. He died in 1814.¹²

some sessions were held in other New Jersey towns and there was competition among the legislators to schedule meetings in their home counties.

⁹ Proceedings, Eleventh General Assembly, First Sitting, second (unnumbered) page.

¹⁰ Burlington County Wills, No. 11424C (original will and inventory); Book 34, page 382 (recorded will and inventory).

¹¹ Michael Hodder, personal correspondence, May 18, 1991.

¹² James P. Snell, *History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, New Jersey, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers*. Philadelphia, Everts & Peck, 1881, p.204.

Joseph Biddle was a well-to-do farmer in Springfield Township, Burlington County, still a rural municipality today. The son of Joseph and Sarah Rogers Biddle, he was known as "Joseph, Jr." until the death of his father in 1776. He posted bond on November 7, 1763, to guarantee his fitness to marry Sarah Shreve; the wedding presumably took place shortly thereafter. Joseph was active in local government, attending the earliest recorded Springfield Township meeting held March 12, 1776, at the house of Thomas Atkinson, at which time he was elected to the office of Freeholder (local representative to the governing body of Burlington County). He served on the Springfield Township committee (municipal governing body) in 1777 and 1781, and served as Township Clerk and Assessor for several years during the 1780's and early 90's. He served in the State Assembly in 1779 and from 1785 to 1790. At his death in early 1792, his estate owned farm property and equipment, 50 veal cattle, 55 sheep, 40 hogs, harvested crops and "stilles" in a "still house." The estate was appraised at 4,464 pounds, including nearly 2,300 pounds worth of debt instruments due, together with interest. The appraisal made no reference to Biddle's surveying business, which therefore must have been incidental to his farming activities. Biddle was survived by his wife and two children, Stacy, who also became a legislator, and Beulah.¹³

The notes belonging to Ms. Woodward show descriptions of surveys made to the following persons: Jno. Monrow, Robert Webb, Jno. Budd, D. Leeds, James Springer, Abm. Jones, Asher Gauntt, Reuel Elton, Michael Newbold, Jos. Ridgway and Thomas Bronson. The foregoing names include those of several old-line Burlington County families. Also included in the survey notes are such Burlington County place names as Ancocas (now Rancocas) Creek, Mount Misery Creek and Eggharbour Road. The presence of these names in the notes lends further credence to the identification of Joseph Biddle as the writer of the notes.

Biographical Sketch

David D. Gladfelter

David D. Gladfelter, researcher and author of *A Forgotten New Jersey Colonial Coinage Proposal*, practices law in Bordentown, New Jersey and lives in Moorestown, New Jersey with his wife and two children. His interest in the numismatics of New Jersey goes back many years and his published articles have covered a wide range including *Relics of New Jersey's Village Industry: The Iron and Glass Works Tokens* in 1971, *Mark Newby: Quaker Pioneer* in 1974 and *New Jersey's Civil War Tokens*, and *The Belleville Mint* in 1987. His major collecting interest is, primarily, the medals and tokens issued by diesinkers and engravers, a field in which previously unknown pieces seem to be continually turning up.

¹³ Major E. M. Woodward, *History of Burlington County, New Jersey, with Biographical Sketches of many of its Pioneers and Prominent Men*. Philadelphia, Everts & Peck, 1883, pp. 441-442. New Jersey Archives, Burlington County Wills, No. 11424C (original will and inventory), Book 34, page 382 (recorded will and inventory); Burlington County Marriage Bonds, 1683-1790, Liber. B, page 340.